

Government 1310 – Introduction to Congress

URL: <http://isites.harvard.edu/k84316>

Spring 2012

Office: CGIS K409

Class: MW 10 – 11am

Room: Yenching Auditorium

Office hr.: Th 10am – 12pm

Introduction to Congress seeks to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of Congress as both a representative and policymaking institution. This course is an “introduction” in that the material does not require any prior knowledge of the U.S. Congress. The lectures and readings this semester explore whether Congress is the fundamentally flawed institution that its low approval ratings and monikers such as “the broken branch” would have us believe. Through an understanding of congressional procedure and analysis of the relationship between representation and institutional design we will critically examine the centerpiece of our republic. By the end of the term students should be able to:

1. demonstrate knowledge of the “textbook Congress.”
2. understand how institutional design impacts the pace and nature of policy change over time.
3. develop an integrative, rather than insular, view of Congress and American politics more broadly.

Requirements

Readings

Students are expected to complete the reading assignments each week. The course readings serve as a foundation and supplement for the class lecture. There are two required books for class:

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* New York: Cambridge University Press. 6th edition.
- Oleszek, Walter J. 2007. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. 7th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

The remaining course readings are either book chapters or articles from academic journals. Check the course site for links to pdf copies of these readings. Alternatively, all journal articles can be accessed using the library's electronic resources.

Section

Students are expected to attend section each week. Sections are intended to:

- Walk students through the more technical aspects of the readings.
- Discuss key elements of the readings in terms of how potential exam questions could be answered.
- Reinforce particularly difficult concepts from the lecture.
- Highlight the linkages between topics week-to-week.
- Allow for greater student contribution to discussions of how the course materials relate to real world events.
- Provide students with an opportunity to sharpen their critiques/defenses of Congress as an institution.

Exams

In order to evaluate students' grasp of the course readings and lectures there will be four take-home examinations. More information about the nature of these exams will be provided by separate handouts as the exams approach. The exam dates below are subject to change once the course schedule is finalized.

- First Exam will happen the week of February 27.
- Second Exam will happen the week of March 19.
- Third Exam will happen the week of April 16.
- Fourth Exam is due Thursday, May 3.

Course Assessment and Class Policies

Requirement	Due Date	Points	Percent of Grade
First Exam	Week of February 27	50	25%
Second Exam	Week of March 19	50	25%
Third Exam	Week of April 16	50	25%
Fourth Exam	May 3	50	25%

Points	Letter Grade
200 - 190	A
189 - 180	A-
179 - 174	B+
173 - 166	B
165 - 160	B-
159 - 154	C+
153 - 146	C
145 - 140	C-
139 - 134	D+
133 - 126	D
125 - 120	D-
119 - 0	E

Late Work

Students are expected to submit all exams on their respective due dates. If there is some reasonable time conflict that a student can anticipate, then some accommodations can be made for earlier exams. Barring some personal emergency that incapacitates a student such that it would be impossible to complete an exam, some extensions and/or make-ups may be allowed. In the unlikely event that an exam is submitted after the specified due date, exams are penalized by 10pts (5% of the final grade) for each day the exam is late.

Students will submit their exams to the dropbox specified on the course site. It is the responsibility for each student to ensure that they properly submit their work. The exam dropbox will close at the due date and time, *all papers submitted after the dropbox has closed* should be emailed to both Professor Platt and the student's TF. Only Professor Platt has the authority to grant extensions and or mark exams as late, so students should not attempt to negotiate with their TFs on these matters. It is important to reiterate that students are responsible for the submission of their work. Problems with email or the dropbox are not taken into consideration for extensions or late penalties. If Professor Platt does not have a copy of the exam (via the dropbox or email), then the exam does not exist.

Course Schedule

1 Shopping Week

1.1 Monday 1/23: Course Introduction

1.2 Wednesday 1/25: Constitutional Origins and Criticisms

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* pp. 29-44.
- Levinson, Sanford. 2006. *Our Undemocratic Constitution*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chap 2.

2 The Spatial Model

2.1 Monday 1/30 and Wednesday 2/1: The Spatial Model and Quantitative Political Science

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* Appendix.
- Stewart, Charles. 2001. *Analyzing Congress*. Chap. 1

3 The Textbook Congress

3.1 Monday 2/6: The Budget Process and Preparing Legislation

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* Chap 7.
- Oleszek, Walter. 2011. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. Chap 2-3.

3.2 Wednesday 2/8: Floor Procedure in the House and Senate

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* Chap 8.
- Oleszek, Walter. *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*. Chaps 4-7.

3.3 Monday 2/13: Origins of the Modern Congress

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* pp. 42-51.
- Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review* 62: 144-168.

- Kravitz, Walter. 1990. "The Advent of the Modern Congress: The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 15: 375-399.

3.4 Wednesday 2/15: Deviating from the Textbook

- Sinclair, Barbara. 2007. *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*. Washington, D.c.: CQ Press. Chap 6.
- Mann, Thomas E. and Norman Ornstein. 2006. *The Broken Branch: How Congress is Failing America and How to Get it Back on Track*. New York: Oxford University Press.

3.5 Monday 2/20: President's Day – No Class

3.6 Wednesday 2/22: Institutional Design is Political

- Katz, Jonathan N. and Brian R. Sala. "Careerism, Committee Assignments, and the Electoral Connection." *American Political Science Review* 90: 21-33.
- Binder, Sarah A. 1996. "The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990." *American Political Science Review* 90: 8-20.
- Schickler, Eric. 2000. "Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models." *American Political Science Review* 94: 269-288.

3.7 First Exam takes place week of February 27

4 Money in Politics – Elections and Representation

4.1 Monday 2/27: Money, Elections, and Skewed Representation

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- Hall, Richard and Alan Deardorf. 2006. "Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy." *American Political Science Review* 100: 69-84.
- Lessig, Lawrence. 2011. *Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress and a Plan to Stop It*. New York: Twelve.

4.2 Wednesday 2/29: Candidates and Campaigns

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* Chap 3.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, Jr., and Charles Stewart III. 2001. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 136-159.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 1989. "Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections, 1946-86." *American Political Science Review* 83: 773-793.

4.3 Monday 3/5: The Incumbency Advantage and Campaign Spending

- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, Jr., and Charles Stewart III. 2000. "Old Voters, New Voters, and the Personal Vote: Using Redistricting to Measure the Incumbency Advantage." *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 17-34.
- Cox, Gary W. and Jonathan N. Katz. 1996. "Why Did the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections Grow." *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 478-497.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 1990. "The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections: new Evidence for Old Arguments." *American Journal of Political Science* 34: 334-362.
- Goldstein, Ken and Paul Freedman. 2000. "New Evidence for New Arguments: Money and Advertising in the 1996 Senate Elections." *Journal of Politics* 62: 1087-1108.

4.4 Wednesday 3/7: The Electoral Connection

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* Chap 4.
- Fenno, Richard F. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71: 883-917.
- Sulkin, Tracy and Nathaniel Swigger. 2008. "Is There Truth in Advertising? Campaign Ad Images as Signals about Legislative Behavior." *Journal of Politics* 70: 232-244.

4.5 Monday 3/12 and Wednesday 3/14: Spring Break – No Class

4.6 Second Exam will take place the week of 3/19

5 The Party in Government

5.1 Monday 3/19: The Partisan Organization of Congress

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* Chap 5.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2007. *Legislative Leviathan* 2nd ed. Chap 5.

5.2 Wednesday 3/21: Party Strength and Polarization

- Aldrich, John H. and David W. Rohde. 2000. "The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee." *Journal of Politics* 62: 1-33.
- Cooper, Joseph and David W. Brady. 1981. "Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn." *American Political Science Review* 75: 411-425.

6 The Committee System

6.1 Monday 3/26: Two Theories of Committees

- Smith, Steven, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. *The American Congress* Chap 6.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. "The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power." *American Political Science Review* 81: 85-104.
- Krehbiel, Keith, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. "Why Are Congressional Committees Powerful?" *American Political Science Review* 81: 929-945.
- Krehbiel, Keith. "Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?" *American Political Science Review* 84: 149-163.

6.2 Wednesday 3/28: Jurisdiction and Gatekeeping

- King, David C. 1994. "The Nature of Congressional Committee Jurisdictions." *American Political Science Review* 88: 48-62.
- Cox, Gary W. and Matthew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Chap 2.

7 Congressional Policymaking

7.1 Monday 4/9: Agenda Setting

- Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agenda, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. New York: Longman Press. Chapter 1.
- Jones, Bryan D. and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2005. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. chapter 1.

7.2 Wednesday 4/11: The Stubborn Status Quo

- Jones, Bryan D. and Frank Baumgartner. 2004. "A Model of Choice for Public Policy." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 15: 325-351.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chap 2.

7.3 Exam 3 takes place Week of 4/16

7.4 Monday 4/16: The Public, Protest, and Policy

- Stimson, James A., Michael B. Mackuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89: 543-565.
- King, Brayden G., Keith G. Bentele, and Sarah A. Soule. 2007. "Protest and Policymaking: Explaining Fluctuation in Congressional Attention to Rights Issues, 1960-1986." *Social Forces* 86: 137-163.
- Baumgartner et al. 2009. *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chaps TBA

7.5 Wednesday 4/18: Congress and the Executive

- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 313-329.
- McCubbins, Mathew and Thomas Schwarz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28: 165-179.

8 My Favorite Topics

8.1 Monday 4/23: Bill Sponsorship

- Cooper, Joseph and Cheryl D. Young. 1989. "Bill Introduction in the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Institutional Change." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14: 67-105.
- Schiller, Wendy J. 1995. "Senators as Political Entrepreneurs: Using Bill Sponsorship to Shape Legislative Agendas." *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 186-203.

8.2 Wednesday 4/25: Descriptive Representation

- Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent Yes." *Journal of Politics* 61: 628-657.
- Baker, Andy and Corey Cook. 2005. "Representing Black Interests and Promoting Black Culture: The Importance of African American Descriptive Representation in the U.S. House." *Du Bois Review* 2: 227-246.
- Barreto, Matt A., Gary M. Segura, and Nathan D. Woods. 2003. "The Mobilizing Effect of Majority-Minority Districts on Latino Turnout." *American Political Science Review* 98: 65-75.